

Establishing A Policy For A “Rail With Trail” Along The County-Owned Ulster And Delaware Railroad Corridor

Referred to: The Economic Development, Tourism, Housing, Planning & Transit Committee (Chairman Briggs and Legislators Allen, Archer, Litts, Maloney, Maio, and Wishnick)

Legislators Lynn Archer, Craig Lopez and Mary Beth Maio and Legislators Gregorius, Provenzano and Wishnick offer the following:

WHEREAS, the County of Ulster purchased the 38.6-mile Ulster and Delaware Railroad (U&D) corridor in 1979 to promote economic development through expanded tourism and to provide recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, since 1983, the entire U&D corridor has been leased to a private tourism railroad company, which entered a 25-year lease for the U&D corridor in 1991 that expires on May 31, 2016; and

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature has determined that it is critical to establish a policy for the future uses of this important public asset; and

WHEREAS, Ulster County’s adopted Open Space Plan recommends creating better links between communities, trails, transportation and tourism, and the 2008 Ulster County Transportation Council’s Non-Motorized Transportation Plan and its Long Range Transportation Plan call for linking regional trail systems together to achieve a seamless non-motorized transportation network that will improve the quality of life for local residents through improved walkability and bikeability and will serve as a tourism resource to market Ulster County as a destination; and

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature shares a vision with the Ulster County Executive to create a world-class tourism destination through the development of a seamless multi-use trail system that closes the gaps in the existing trails and offers substantial public benefits, including expansion of recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, improvement of public health, and promotion of economic development and tourism in the City of Kingston and throughout Ulster County, while also promoting and ensuring future railroad tourism operations in a segment of the U&D corridor between Boiceville and Phoenicia, where such operations have been focused for the past three decades; and

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WHEREAS, the conversion of sections of the publicly-owned U&D corridor into a rail trail from Kingston to and along the Ashokan Reservoir will serve to connect three of the County’s rail trails, the Hudson Valley Rail Trail with the planned extension to New Paltz, the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail with the opening of the Rosendale Railroad Trestle into Kingston and the O&W Rail Trail with plans to connect to Kingston creating an integrated rail trail network with access to the Ashokan Reservoir and the Walkway Over the Hudson, maximizing quality of life and economic development opportunities across the county; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Ulster County Legislature hereby establishes a policy to support a segmented “rail with trail” plan to convert the U&D corridor to a rail trail only in the segment between Kingston and Boiceville; and be it further

RESOLVED, in the furtherance of this policy for segmented rail with trail, the Ulster County Legislature also hereby establishes a policy to support and encourage the continued operation of a tourism railroad along an appropriate section of the U&D corridor west of the Ashokan Reservoir; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Ulster County Legislature requests the County Executive submit a plan outlining projects and secured funding sources to advance planning and design for the rail trail conversion; and develop and solicit a request for proposals for potential tourism railroads to operate west of the Ashokan Reservoir in the future, as set forth herein and above,

and move its adoption

ADOPTED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES:

NOES:

Passed Committee: The Economic Development, Tourism, Housing, Planning & Transit on _____.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

NONE